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**December 30, 2020**

## A Tale Of A New Year's Resolution

The *Wall Street Journal* reports of another misguided decision by the Trump administration.

New U.S. Dietary Guidelines Reject Recommendation to Cut Sugar, Alcohol Intake Limit

> The federal government on Tuesday issued new dietary guidelines that keep current allowances for sugar and alcohol consumption unchanged, rejecting recommendations by its scientific advisory committee to make significant cuts.
>
> The scientific committee, which was composed of 20 academics and doctors, had recommended cutting the limit for added sugars in the diet to 6% of daily calories from 10% in the current guidelines, citing rising rates of obesity and the link between obesity and health problems like Type 2 diabetes, heart disease and cancer.
> ...
> The dietary guidelines, which are updated every five years, have a wide impact: They shape school lunch programs, mold state and local health-promotion efforts, and influence what food companies produce.
>
> The U.S. Departments of Agriculture and Health and Human Services reviewed the committee’s recommendations, which were released in July, and decided not to include the lower limits because “the new evidence is not substantial enough to support changes to quantitative recommendations for either added sugars or alcohol,” said Brandon Lipps, deputy undersecretary for food, nutrition and consumer services at the USDA. Mr. Lipps said that **the new limits recommended by the scientific committee didn’t meet a “preponderance of the evidence” standard required by law.**

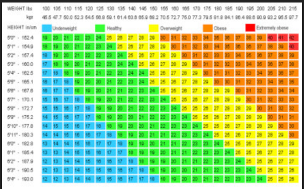
One would think that the obvious evidence of preponderance within the U.S. population would be sufficient to meet the "preponderance of the evidence" required by law.

Anyway, I'll use the above as a hook to tell a personal story. One which is a bit off from the other content you usually find here.

Two years ago I made a private New Year's resolution to lose weight. Over the decades I had slowly, slowly gained one pound after the other. Having an office job and often being too lazy to do sports both had contributed to that. I was no longer comfortable with the look and feel of my body. So I set myself a target weight but not a time limit to reach it. Fearing failure I did not tell anyone about it.

This month I finally got there.

At the end of 2018 my bathroom scales had shown 83.6 kilogram (184lb 5oz, 13st 2lb). My calculated Body Mass Index (BMI) at a height of 1.70 meter (5'7") was 29 (BMI = weight [kg] / (height [m])^2 ). That was definitely overweight and only one point below the definition of obese.



🟦 Underweight 🟩 Healthy 🟨 Overweight 🟧 Obese 🟥 Extremely obese

| WEIGHT lbs | 100 | 105 | 110 | 115 | 120 | 125 | 130 | 135 | 140 | 145 | 150 | 155 | 160 | 165 | 170 | 175 | 180 | 185 | 190 | 195 | 200 | 205 | 210 | 215 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| kgs | 45.5 | 47.7 | 50.0 | 52.3 | 54.5 | 56.8 | 59.1 | 61.4 | 63.6 | 65.9 | 68.2 | 70.5 | 72.7 | 75.0 | 77.3 | 79.5 | 81.8 | 84.1 | 86.4 | 88.6 | 90.9 | 93.2 | 95.5 | 97.7 |
| HEIGHT in/cm | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 5'0" - 152.4 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | 32 | 33 | 34 | 35 | 36 | 37 | 38 | 39 | 40 | 41 | 42 |
| 5'1" - 154.9 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | 32 | 33 | 34 | 35 | 36 | 36 | 37 | 38 | 39 | 40 |
| 5'2" - 157.4 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | 32 | 33 | 33 | 34 | 35 | 36 | 37 | 38 | 39 |
| 5'3" - 160.0 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | 32 | 32 | 33 | 34 | 35 | 36 | 37 | 38 |
| 5'4" - 162.5 | 17 | 18 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | 31 | 32 | 33 | 34 | 35 | 36 | 37 |
| 5'5" - 165.1 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 30 | 31 | 32 | 33 | 34 | 35 | 35 |
| 5'6" - 167.6 | 16 | 17 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 29 | 30 | 31 | 32 | 33 | 34 | 34 |
| 5'7" - 170.1 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 29 | 30 | 31 | 32 | 33 | 33 |
| 5'8" - 172.7 | 15 | 16 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | 32 | 32 |
| 5'9" - 175.2 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | 31 |
| 5'10" - 177.8 | 14 | 15 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 30 |
| 5'11" - 180.3 | 14 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 28 | 29 | 30 |
| 6'0" - 182.8 | 13 | 14 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 27 | 28 | 29 |
| 6'1" - 185.4 | 13 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 27 | 28 |
| 6'2" - 187.9 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 18 | 19 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 27 |
| 6'3" - 190.5 | 12 | 13 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 15 | 16 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 20 | 21 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 25 | 26 | 26 |
| 6'4" - 193.0 | 12 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 14 | 15 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 17 | 18 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 22 | 23 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 25 | 26 |

bigger

The target I had set for myself was 63 kg, a weight I last had when I was 18 years old. At the time I had chosen that target I did not expect myself to ever reach it. But since two weeks ago I am a pound or so below it. My BMI is now 21.6 and on the way more healthy side of life.

So how does one lose a quarter of one's weight?

There was little I could do with changing the content of my diet. I have long avoided processed food and mostly cook for myself from fresh produce. The meat, fish, eggs and vegetables I buy are mostly from 'green' sources. My preferred breads were and are of wholemeal sourdough from a trusted local bakery. I have a daily portion of fresh fruits and avoid soft-drinks or other sugary products (exceptions: vanilla ice cream, licorice and dark chocolate). My limit for added sugars in the diet was already less than 3% of daily calories. There was little I could change with that to be more healthy.

To do more sports was not feasible either. I tried. But doing enough sports to lose weight while being overweight is actually pretty hard. To move around those extra pounds requires a lot of extra efforts.

The only plausibly way I could lose weight was to eat less. So I decided to eat half of everything.

I held back on second helpings at lunch and halved the size of my diner sandwich. During the first months I -of course- cheated on that. But over time, as my weight started to slowly, slowly go down, I came nearer to the ideal intake. During the whole time I was (and still am) eating the very same stuff I had eaten before. My (now smaller) lunch has continued to be finished with a piece of dark chocolate. I still have a (now smaller) daily scoop of vanilla ice cream with lemon juice. I still baked and ate Christmas cookies like I have done every year. But because I ate less of everything my weight continued to slowly, slowly, go down.

Several times there were frustrating weeks and even months during which the scales would not budge at all. My weight had plateaued even as I continued to eat less. Afraid of losing my motivation I stopped using the scales for some time. Several weeks later they again showed progress.

So here I am. My target has been -unexpectedly- reached. That ugly wobbling belly is (mostly) gone. I am pretty sure my weight will now stay in its current range. And yes, it feels great to no longer move those extra pounds around. I have also won more confidence in myself.

There is a negative side to it. My wardrobe is now full of stuff that is hopelessly oversized. I look sloppy when I wear it. I will need to buy all new pants, belts and sweatshirts. I'll be happy to do that.

So what now? What will my next New Year's resolution be?

There are, unfortunately, several choices. I still do too little sports and will need to start a program to rectify that. I have already cut back on alcohol. Still, less or none would be better. And I am still smoking way too much. I am not sure which of these bad habits I will tackle first. But a year or two from now I may let you know of it.

Why tell and publish this story?

I thought it might motivate some of you to do something similar - be it loss of weight or some other personal aim.

Even with small steps (on average I lost less than half a pound per week) one can actually reach a far away target.

One only has to stay steady and not give up.

Posted by b on December 30, 2020 at 18:53 UTC | Permalink

## Comments

As some one facng the same challenge congrats b.

Posted by: BraveNewWorld | Dec 30 2020 19:09 utc | 1

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Good thing you have your own blog. Too many lobbies would object to your message & conclusions if posted on Twitter, Facebook or YouTube. It's going to require an analogous, sustained, aggregate effort to downsize the amount of excess cultural baggage our country is carrying. Even the COVID-19 impact would be dramatically less if most Americans reduced their excess body weight & thereby reduced their co-morbidities. Beyond adipose tissue, our cultural practices also exhibit a lot of excess baggage. Think of how much better we'd all feel if we cooperated more and argued less. Damping frictions would allow interactions, more discussion and more return-on-coordination.

Posted by: Roger Erickson | Dec 30 2020 19:10 utc | 2

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Great job! I know many people who’ve tried and not succeeded or had partial success at the cost of feeling bad because they had to give up their favourite (usually fatty foods and snacks). I understand the too lazy for sports part. May I recommend swimming and biking? They seem to be good sports for “lazy” people. And that combination may even get your body to Adonis levels if you do it regularly. Then you willl have the healthy body to match your healthy mind and may afford a few more scoops of ice cream and an extra piece of chocolate!

Posted by: Dušan | Dec 30 2020 19:18 utc | 3

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Yes, that's how you do it. Good job. You'll never regret it.

Posted by: Bemildred | Dec 30 2020 19:23 utc | 4

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Ilost 10kg or so in 2020, my resolution was made during lockdown in April. I also found portion control and determination not to allow snacks to be quite effective. It was combined with daily sets of situps pressups pullups and squats, all exercises using your own weight, and easily done at home, with numners of reps built up. Debate exists about the effectiveness of situps, but I like them. Regular cycling and walking has supplemented this. At 176cm I peaked at 94kg 18 years ago. At that time it was reduced to ~80kg by taking up cycling, but this years diet changes have improved things again.

Posted by: tspoon | Dec 30 2020 19:35 utc | 5

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Congratulations!

I know what you speak of as I lost a considerable amount of weigh this year and I’m only 8kg away from my goal weight.

There are two differences though.

I cut out all starch (bread, pasta, rice, potatoes) I only eat fruit/vegetables/meat/dairy. The way I see it, fat is stored energy. In order to get your body to burn its stores you need to cut out carbohydrates and let your body convert that fat into energy.

I exercise. I couldn’t do 8000 steps in a whole day now I do 16000 plus per day. The key to exercising I found it to break it up. Instead of doing say 5000 steps in one go break it up into parts. 1000 steps early morning. 1000 steps mid morning. 1000 steps lunch time. 10000 steps mid afternoon. 1000 steps in the evening.

Posted by: Down South | Dec 30 2020 19:39 utc | 6

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Congratulations!
"One only has to stay steady and not give up."
IMHO this is one of the top, if not the most important way to achieve anything in life.

I am too at the point where i would need to tackle both (again) doing more sports (with swimming pools, Gyms closed) and having to reduce and ultimately stop smoking again.

Having achivied both years ago (though after stress mounted 1-2 years later, i started smoking again, and did less sports too), i would say that IMHO it is best to focus on ONE target at a time.

And if one does "fail" to change such a habit completely: Try reducing smoking/eating/whatever over time, with a set limit, and make a protocol of your progress.
Taking control, and making oneself conscious of one's habits is a central step that alone changes much.

And of course analyse WHY you are smoking/drinking too much or at all: What causes the need? What underlying problems are in your life and psyche? Like with all drugs (sugar, alcohol and nicotine are often overlooked on the topic of drugs and addiction) there are reasons, and if one can find them, one can change behaviour from the root cause.

This writes a barfly that has fought and won against addictions of all major illegal drugs and alcohol.
Nicotine and doing too few fitness training and sports are the only unhealthy vices left to me.
And those too will in time also be reduced, and turned around again.

Though i have to admit, ironically nicotine is much harder to get off than even a longtime rophypnol or heroin addiction in my experience.. There is a reason smoking is allowed in every rehab or jail here in Germany still despite draconian anti-smoking laws in general. They can take aways everything else, but would they try to prevent smoking there, it would end in chaos and riots. ;)

Posted by: DontBelieveEitherPr. | Dec 30 2020 19:53 utc | 7

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I too had to lose weight due to being diagnosed as diabetic. Sport (in that I mean aerobic excercise) is actually quite an inefficient way to lose weight as our bodies have evolved to consume calories very effciently (which is why its difficult to lose weight) and you burn as many calories sitting an hour on the toilet as you would on a 15 minute jog!
If you really want to burn calories then weights is the best way to go. The body is inefficient in repairing muscle damage and unlike aerobic excercise you cna continue to burn calories up to 16 hours after your session

Posted by: mo | Dec 30 2020 19:57 utc | 8

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b -- quit smoking! You will feel better.
Best wishes

Posted by: Joseph A Brady | Dec 30 2020 19:59 utc | 9

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This IS a motivating story. Thanks for posting it.

Having had lots of experience going in and out of shape, I have advice for exercise. Do something you enjoy doing, like going for a walk. Take it easy. If you take it easy, you'll be surprised to find that your body will gradually want to do more. You will eventually be surprised to find that you are pretty fit.

In my heyday I did a lot of strenuous hiking and weight training. It all starts with walks in the neighborhood and six pound dumbbells. When you start lifting you're just trying to make your muscles used to the movement.

The absolute key is to take it easy. Don't even set any goals. You can start out reveling in the wimpiness of your workouts.

Good luck!

Posted by: Offtrail | Dec 30 2020 20:08 utc | 10

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Well done b,

During lockdown here in the UK- I was stuck at home (my job in hospitality stopped) and I over indulged - it made me fat and depressed.

I started to go for a walk for about an hour each day - eat less of the rubbish I was indulging in (biscuits,crisps,sweets,chocolate).

The exercise improved my mood and I lost weight.

We are in lockdown again in the UK and I am determined not to fall back into the unhealthy patterns.

It’s hard though as lockdown is depressing for me as I hate the social isolation after working for years in such a busy environment.

Posted by: James2 | Dec 30 2020 20:10 utc | 11

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Dear b,

Nicotine is one of the most highly addictive substances known, so quitting smoking is a daunting challenge for most. Have you considered vaping instead? That way you avoid the carcinogens that come with smoking tobacco. Believe it or not, nicotine actually has some beneficial effects, as it is anti-inflammatory and reduces the appetite (not that I would advocate starting for those reasons). Or perhaps you could switch to vaping and then gradually wean yourself from that.

Posted by: farm ecologist | Dec 30 2020 20:16 utc | 12

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We will still give preponderance to your views.

Older folks may prefer the Smart Body Mass Index.

Posted by: Keith McClary | Dec 30 2020 20:18 utc | 13

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That is a tremendous accomplishment, not at all easy to do!

Posted by: ptb | Dec 30 2020 20:19 utc | 14

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congratulations b! quit smoking next.. i know that is quite hard to do too... kudos to you on your discipline and this story... it is inspirational!

Posted by: james | Dec 30 2020 20:25 utc | 15

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Your approach of reducing the size of your meals (reduced caloric intake) is the correct and only way to lose weight and to maintain the present weight.
Congratulations on your persistence and perseverance.
It is time to apply these attributes to your new quest to stop smoking.
Have a Happy and Healthy Christmas.

Posted by: pfmd | Dec 30 2020 20:29 utc | 16

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PS - for exercise, do it, but don't overdo it. Long walks are a great, and not just for the body. Even better with hills or natural places. One can do a LOT with body weight exercises, if interested. And swimming changed my life with some intermittent health issues - I would even say that access to a lap pool was the best money I've ever spent. (sadly not available during Covid). Anyway good luck with whatever program you pick out. Being organized and having a routine are probably as important as the actual methods.

Posted by: ptb | Dec 30 2020 20:31 utc | 17

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On this i agree 150% with you b.
I have the same experience and also lost 1/3 of my weight by deciding to eat less, NOT stop eating what i like.
I do smoke WAY to much but i drink 2 units of alcohol max in a year.(1 Akvavit with the Christmas dinner and maybe 1 Akvavit to the new year dinner+ i sometimes smoke Hashish🙄)
It works.

Posted by: Per/Norway | Dec 30 2020 20:31 utc | 18

An encouraging story, b, and many thanks. The hooks are in very deep, or so it always seems, and yet the off-switch is always very close to the surface, if we can just find the right dialog with ourselves. It seems you found the right method. Congratulations

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If you think about quitting smoking, allow me to mention that I spent eight years trying to do that and then found the way to succeed.

It's simple enough to quit smoking, but it's the staying quit that's hard - hence my 8 years of thinking I was done and then falling back into it even after a year or two.

Eventually I didn't simply quit, instead I became a "happy non-smoker" - that made all the difference. Now when I see a situation that might once have been a temptation to have just one puff, instead I see someone caught in a delusion, with which I sympathize, and to which I have zero desire to return. Zero desire - no willpower required.

I got this change of view from Alan Carr, whose book may be available in Germany - it's out of print in the US. He has a website I just discovered, and he addresses more things than smoking now. His method is called the Easyway, and that should be enough for anyone to find him. I don't want to be a shill, so no link.

Good fortune to us all.

Posted by: Grieved | Dec 30 2020 20:41 utc | 19

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Ah, yeah. Loss of weight wouldn`t be such a bad idea... I used to ride bicycle a lot when I was younger. One can start with short distances and increase speed and disctance slowly while listening to music and enjoying the beauty of the landscape. It might be an option for you.

Posted by: m | Dec 30 2020 20:48 utc | 20

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I don't see the USDA guidelines as making much difference either way. What use is it to reduce the RDA from 50g of sugar to 36g of sugar, when people are already blowing past the 50g recommendation with a single bottle of soda pop? The combination of individual choice with the selection of products on the market means the current guidelines are already largely ignored.

Posted by: rockstar | Dec 30 2020 21:12 utc | 21

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> Ah, yeah. Loss of weight wouldn`t be such a bad idea... I used to ride bicycle a lot when I was younger. One can start with short distances and increase speed and disctance slowly while listening to music and enjoying the beauty of the landscape. It might be an option for you.
>
> Posted by: m | Dec 30 2020 20:48 utc | 20

I would object to "listening to music" part of the plan. Bicycling requires some alertness to avoid damage to other vehicles, peoples, animals, shrubbery, your bicycle and last but not least, to your own body. One bonus of the bicycling is that you enjoy more of the landscape than when you walk (or ride), but you are more exposed to bumps, potholes, slippery patches (some with moss! a turn with pavement covered by wet moss, I got extensive damage to apparel and some to skin), critters, little old ladies stopping and blocking your ride etc.

Posted by: Piotr Berman | Dec 30 2020 21:20 utc | 22

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Congrats b.

However, with regards to all those recommending to stop smoking next. Well, I achieved that goal this year after being a total addict for 40 years. I got professional help and it worked from one day to the other, but you know what? I gained weight, I still do, and I hate it. So better think twice... ;-)

(PS: I am in Germany, so if you are interested in those stop-smoking-professionals, just send me a mail. But I warned you.)

Posted by: Cemi | Dec 30 2020 21:23 utc | 23

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Be careful with situps as exercise - I'm pretty sure they caused my inguinal hernia.

Posted by: G | Dec 30 2020 21:25 utc | 24

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I cut out all starch (bread, pasta, rice, potatoes) I only eat fruit/vegetables/meat/dairy.

Posted by: Down South | Dec 30 2020 19:39 utc | 6

If it works for you, it is fine, but starch can be a great part of your food when you diet. First observe why "added sugar" is "less healthy": sugar in fruits comes together with fiber, slowing down the absorption, it is less concentrated and it is less conducive to uncontrolled snacking or sipping (in the case of sugary drinks). Same with starch. For example, there are sugar free breakfast cereals made of whole grains, I like "grape nuts", they have respectable fiber content. Or use a slow cooker for a mixture of barley, lentils, chia and quinoa (I use proportions 2:2:1:1), once ready it is more than 75% water, and of the remainder, 15% is fiber.

One problem with your diet can be insufficient fiber which may lead to problems with digestion and intestinal diseases -- genetics vary, so what you do can work for you.

Posted by: Piotr Berman | Dec 30 2020 21:33 utc | 25

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Hey b, try yoga.

Make it a resolution. It takes some time to see the results.

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Posted by: Jackrabbit | Dec 30 2020 21:39 utc | 26

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That is so wrong. Moonkind would have to have the willpower of, well, you, to stick to such a program. The right way to lose weight is to eat a lot of high fiber low calory vegetables like-ugh- califlower, brussel spouts, broccoli, and cabbage. You may not believe this but actually
it is possible to cook these kinds of things so that they are not only edible but delicious.

Why? Because it fools your body, which is a mindless animal, to thinking you are still eating normally, and will not slow down your metablism as it would otherwise do, and as it did in your case. A new diet program, Noom or something, essentially advocates this and they have had a much greater rate of success then the old diet programs.

As for sports, forget it. You'll just get hurt. Walk. At least 20 minutes but as much more as you have the time and energy for. the medical professional says 40 minutes if you still believe in what they say.

Forget cutting out liquor, just water or ice it more and drink only wine and beer, a half bottle or glass at a time if you can.

What you really have to do, and this is much more important than losing weight, is to stop smoking. That's a real bitch. After you stop you'll still want to smoke for months and years afterward. But unfortunately what they say about smoking is true.

Your metablism will slow down when you stop. More broccli, more brussel sprouts.

Posted by: ELI | Dec 30 2020 21:40 utc | 27

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I smoked for 40 something years. Recently my doctor convinced me to take a shot at quitting. I received a prescription for Chantix. Miracle of miracles, it actually worked and was fairly easy. You start taking Chantix for a month or so while continuing to smoke but slowing down. Then when you feel its right, you quit. What I noticed is my sense of taste changed. Smoking became bland and I seemed to lose the urge to smoke. Also noticed the same with alcohol. The urges just started to go away. I was cutting back and then one day, said that was it. Weirdly that first night I quit, I had withdrawal symptoms even though I was down to only a couple cigarettes a day. The symptoms were gone by the next day. And I quit....for 5 months. With everything going on in May, I really needed a cigarette and boom, within a week or so, I was back to where I started. Still once things settle down a bit, I am going to quit again. And now, I know I can do it.

Worked for me when nothing else worked. Might work for you.

Posted by: Jagger | Dec 30 2020 21:47 utc | 28

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Hi! Great story. I have a real soft spot for this kind of thing. Congratulations on reaching your goal. I have, I'm 99% certain, mentioned the following book in your comments section before. It was enormously helpful to me to read Golden Holocaust, by Robert Proctor. For reasons I cannot consciously access, this book really put the "nail in the coffin" of my mild smoking habit. I speculate that it may be due to the feeling that I was a victim of tobacco company "propaganda." The tobacco industry uses some of the most sophisticated marketing and public relations techniques of any industry or government. Proctor makes an excellent argument that the cigarette is one of most engineered objects of all time. The cunning with which tobacco companies manipulate people is astounding. I probably felt relieved to understand the psychological techniques, including sophisticated nicotine dosing controlled by finger placement and inhalation style, that make it so hard to quit.

Even if it doesn't help one quit smoking, I'm sure it will help shed light on how propaganda works.

Good luck.

Posted by: Peter L. | Dec 30 2020 21:49 utc | 29

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Happy new year b
Thanks for that positive story theres hope for us all.
My tip is ——- lots of female company ! They seem to take exception to the sight of a man relaxing.
Best way to loose weight is find a good women, even better a bad one ! Those calories will burn off and you'l have a contented smile for ever more.

Posted by: Mark2 | Dec 30 2020 22:16 utc | 30

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Thanks for sharing your story b

I have 95% chocolate by Lindt & Sprungli with 2 out of 3 of my daily meals....mmmmm good!

For any sort of addiction problem I suggest a book called Changing For Good by Prochaska, Norcross and Diclemente. What is good about this book is it compiles how others have learned to change and provides an outline of what they found to be the 6 stages of change that you can map your states of being to.

I am a nicotine addict that just has not had any in over 15 years. I don't feel that you lose the addiction to nicotine but learn to live with it.

I was a narcotic addict for 3+ years but thankfully found medical marijuana works almost as well without the side effects.

I agree with b that setting the goal but not making the steps rigid getting there is helpful.

Now, if only getting rid of global private finance was this easy......

Posted by: psychohistorian | Dec 30 2020 22:25 utc | 31

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I know how important exercise is but I seem to do anything to avoid it. I have scoliosis which led to 3 1/2" loss in height. I had a deep massage and gained back an inch -- so much tension in my body. I know that I need regular exercise and I am going to hit the exercise cycle after I finish this post.

An inspiring comment was from the French Polymath Michael Serres who gave up smoking after several decades and the experience was that he got his body back.

Can I give up spending too much time on the computer?

Posted by: Don Midwest | Dec 30 2020 22:25 utc | 32

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Thanks b, that story comes at the right time for me. Being an academic I think a lot but don't move much. During the pandemic my university shifted to remote learning and this shut down even the incidental exercise while ramping up the stress. I gave up smoking 8 years ago and have since been prone to compensating with salty snacks. 2020 was a perfect storm for weight gain and now my BMI is... well higher than yours was I'm ashamed to say. But I took steps this week and have planned something very similar: no time limit but a new discipline and approach. A strict exclusion of known offenders, reduction in fats and excess carbs, more green veg. I'm aiming for a slow burn (>1kg/week). I'm 188cm and my goal is the 80kgs I was when I played rugby 30 years ago (I just turned 51). Like you I'm just sick of feeling uncomfortable, tired, inactive and unable to fit my old 36 long jeans. Thanks for the pep-talk and have a happy 2021. I'll let you know how I go.

Posted by: Patroklos | Dec 30 2020 22:25 utc | 33

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My wife just sent an article from NYT on 4 second exercises. High Intensity Interval Training. A special bike. A coach.

https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/30/well/move/can-4-seconds-of-exercise-make-a-difference.html

I have seen the NYT health journalist Gretchen Reynolds in many articles over the years. Downloaded a few. But not followed through. Yet. Maybe.

It would be worthwhile to read her articles.

Posted by: Don Midwest | Dec 30 2020 22:54 utc | 34

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I recommend Ketosis in conjunction with HIIT training - basically forcing your body to burn fat instead of Carbs, but that's just me.

Posted by: Maximus | Dec 30 2020 23:02 utc | 35

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Well,
I cut out about 90% of my refined sugar intake more than a decade ago,
My refined beer intake...
Not so much.

Happy New Year Everyone.

😉

Posted by: Josh | Dec 30 2020 23:09 utc | 36

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Also,
Check this out,

https://www.thegatewaypundit.com/2020/12/breaking-big-vp-mike-pences-trip-israel-january-6th-cancelled/

https://www.thegatewaypundit.com/2020/12/georgia-senate-judiciary-subcommittee-unanimously-passes-motion-audit-fulton-countys-absentee-ballots-using-method-outlined-jovan-pulitzer/

https://www.thegatewaypundit.com/2020/12/cannot-vote-certify-electoral-college-results-january-6th-breaking-mo-senator-josh-hawley-announces-will-object-certification-process/

Posted by: Josh | Dec 30 2020 23:18 utc | 37

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Congratulations on your progress. Here's a suggestion for you and anyone else interested. I am almost 68 years old and have been working out for many years. My research indicates that for maintaining weight strength training is more i important than aerobics. When the gyms closed here I purchased some resistance bands, both loop and handle bands. I have noticed no decrease in conditioning and the bands fit it a shopping bag. Plus orking out at home I do not have to put up with the new breed of narcisstic muscle heads in the gym.

Posted by: cartero atómico | Dec 30 2020 23:24 utc | 38

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Congratulations. Good job.
Americans are obese now, but we weren't always. You can look at 70's newsreels and see most people were normal weight.
In the 70s, the Farm Bill changed to encourage agribusiness to take over the farms of America. In the 80s hundreds of thousands of farmers lost their land, as the massive machinery chewed up more and more small farms. Willy Nelson and Waylon Jennings held concerts to support the farmers, but charity can't hold a candle to billions of dollars in federal funds.
Factory farms tortured billions of animals, making their short lives miserable and full of pain, so that Americans could switch to bacon-wrapped double cheeseburgers instead of the modest amounts of meat we ate before.
Waterways were polluted with animal waste and a dead zone spread in the Gulf of Mexico.
Farmland was turned into McMansions sprawled outside of all cities, and Americans spent hours a day sitting in their cars going to and from work.
Americans quit walking, quit bicycling, quit playing sports in teams, as more and more of their time was spent sitting in cars or in front of the TV. Schools cut PE and recess, so that more time could be spent teaching to the test and explaining gender theory to little children.
And now we're fat. Majorly fat, morbidly obese, unable to move around without little scooters, with our fat hanging over the sides.
I'm pretty sure individual willpower won't make up for public policy, and I don't mean some panel changing their recommendations on the percentage of sugar in our diets. The Farm Bill has to change and so do zoning laws, not to mention animal abuse laws.

Posted by: wagelaborer | Dec 31 2020 0:04 utc | 39

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A good story of enlightened self-discipline. I lost weight the same way, and stopped smoking decades ago, by recognizing that it is a battle with one's subconscious, which requires iron self-discipline. As I tell teenagers, "There is only one time to resist a temptation, and that time is now."

Quitting smoking produces a sense that there is something wrong or missing. One's subconscious finds every excuse to sneak in foresworn exception, like a judge or politician.

In college, my brother and I agreed on those principles in our conversations, and that we were essentially a different person at the peak of temptation, unable to follow our own principles (like a judge or politician). Having both foresworn ever having another cigarette to each other, he gave me his own, asking me not to give him one if he asked. When he requested one, I poured water into both of our packs. It was late, so they could not be replaced. He protested, but soon quit, and I never smoked again. So another's superego can serve where one's own does not.

Posted by: John | Dec 31 2020 0:09 utc | 40

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ICC no such thing as war crime The nation state system is the problem..

Posted by: snake | Dec 31 2020 0:15 utc | 41

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Congrats to b and for all the good tips about dos and don'ts. I'll be mounting a laptop to my treadmill so I can read, walk, type, and use Dragon Speak to compose manuscripts. One key for me having cardiovascular disease is the use of garbanzo bean flour in my baked goods since it's considered a vegetable and has no gluten. I make heart-healthy breakfast muffins with it and a trove of other goodies that go great with my morning coffee and meds. The one factor the doctors are most insistent about besides diet is exercise--you can make many extra years for yourself just walking, using hand weights and performing basic calisthenics.

Posted by: karlof1 | Dec 31 2020 0:16 utc | 42

Congrats! And - I would quit smoking next. Even if I do not always agree, I wish that this site exists as long as possible!

Posted by: pnyx | Dec 31 2020 0:30 utc | 43

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@ 41 snake... your link doesn't work.. cheers...

Posted by: james | Dec 31 2020 0:35 utc | 44

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Thanks B for posting this inspirational journey.

Posted by: eSilwal | Dec 31 2020 0:47 utc | 45

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Love your work, b.
Now the bad news.
You MUST stop using tobacco. I'm assuming this is what you're referring to. It will kill you. It will rot your teeth and your lungs and damage your heart and poison your blood. In fact it has already done these things and you will face the consequences even if you stop NOW.
The worse news is, once you stop smoking you will gain weight. You will. Despite everything. Your metabolism is already compromised. So you will need to fight your dietary battle all over again once you stop smoking.
But you can do it. I did, you can. Do it. And keep writing.
Happy New Year.

Posted by: pasha | Dec 31 2020 0:55 utc | 46

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Congratulations b.

I have a remarkably similar story. I'm around 5 feet six inches and weighed in at the beginning of 2020 in the mid 180s (I avoided looking too closely at the scale, but that's around where I was).

As of today, I'm at 140.6 pounds, and was as low as 138 and change.

I agree that for people with otherwise decent eating habits, eating less is the inescapable means of getting there, but the one "gimmick" I used (around four days a week) was intermittent fasting for periods of roughly 16 hours (no food between 7 at night and 11 the next morning). Maybe it was a factor, I don't know.

Also, my weight loss campaign more or less coincided with the pandemic, and that had a number of effects.

The first was that as an older person, I didn't need the added risk factor of obesity - definitely a source of motivation.

Also, working from home insulated me from the baked goods people tend to bring into work and office gatherings where similar fare is offered up.

Finally, not being able to go out to eat (and not being a big fan of take-out meals) meant that I cooked for myself and spouse almost every day since March, with a handful of exceptions.

I completely echo your statements about feeling great and gaining self confidence, not a bad thing in the face of the advancing years.

Posted by: expat | Dec 31 2020 1:06 utc | 47

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unfortunately pasha is mostly right. Smoking is a matter of life and death. Maybe they have some newfangled medical stuff that works. Nothing worked for me. But I didn't have a choice. My wife had a disease that required that she stop smoking. She'd never stop if I didn't. There was no way out. I had to stop. So I did. Not even a last cig. It's not a matter of choosing when you don't have a choice.

Posted by: eli | Dec 31 2020 1:27 utc | 48

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An in-depth, practical guide to using your own body weight to build muscle and increase calory burning.

Used in the covid lockdown, only requires a room (preferably with a door). Lots of home-made options, also references to other reliable info on practice.

https://thedeepdish.org/calisthenics/

Posted by: powerandpeople | Dec 31 2020 1:28 utc | 49

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Ok, so I did the opposite to b and have put on a ton of weight since.
I gave up smoking about 15 years ago and since then my weight has ballooned.
It seems to me now that getting control of the kai intake *before* kicking the fags would have been smarter, but that's hindsight.

Since lockdown 1, I have been somewhat better at regulating the amount of tucker I consume eg no 'snacks' only fresh food etc, it hasn't had much effect. My youngest fella who lives here, really likes his pasta and while I have always been careful on portion control of the noodles, I hadn't worried too much about the sauce. I always make my own sauces when it's my turn to cook, but the youngfella prefers to buy ready made pasta sauce and that stuff is bad news as I discovered early on in lockdown after seeing this bloke's videos - watch him this is not your standard boring cooking vid.

So I guess I'll have to redouble my efforts, I don't appear to have lost any weight (hard to tell cause I tossed the bathroom scales a couple partners back because she was so totally fixated on her weight with attendant obsessions) on the other hand I haven't put any on (the jeans I bought in '19 still fit).
There is no doubt that giving up smoking may cause a weight increase, but I'm just gonna have to deal with that, so b's post is heartening.
I too have given up sport, touch rugby requires more speed than I currently muster and my old bones don't need to be crunched by playing the real deal.

Even if I could still see the ball, cricket isn't so demanding so I too have decided being more careful about kai is the only way to go.

Posted by: Debsisdead | Dec 31 2020 1:42 utc | 50

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You have found a winning formula, congrats!

NO SUGAR or substitutes, it really is the opium of the masses that needs obliterating from the human diet. Big Pharma and Health Insurance create such diseases for profit - from the cornstarch subsidised pork belly farmers to the fast food joints to all the crap snacks in a conveyor belt to plug into these money sucking industries ( coming in a day to the U.K. - hoofuckingrah!)

Some excellent suggestions by folks here too.

I'll share my experience for information . Mainly one big meal a day. And 8-10 hours without any food - that is crucial.
I can suggest a hours walk at a reasonable pace 2/3 miles depending on terrain. Good to get a rhythm and enjoying it.
Housework & Gardening is underrated, just a bit of daily tidying, digging , planting bulbs , maybe veg, you suddenly realise you've done a bunch of gym exercises bending, squatting , lifting etc. It can be done in short periods through the day. Whilst having a cigarette even! I smoke but only outdoors and minimal during the day - having a few with beers and fellow smokers outdoors in the evening instead. However I gave up tailor mades years ago and moved to roll ups and haven't looked back since. The chemicals in a straight cigarettes now make me gag. And they are way too expensive in the U.K.

I seem to have a similar diet. But have always been at a similar weight since my 20's. Used to eat plenty of all the wrong stuff and smoke and drink regularly, but working long days and being young and dancing like fool just about kept me fit. Slow recovery as you get past the 40's brought these excesses to a end. Now days it has to be good fresh ingredients, real bread, little meat, more fish, minimal fried food and almost no takeaway or ready made TV dinners. Burger or Pizza and chips (fries) are a treat. A daily small dessert and nuts and healthy snacks when necessary.

Small breakfast toast or bun and plenty of tea most days . Smallish lunch. Big dinner is my general habit.

But I do like my real beer! and can happily quaff 2/3 pints in a regular evening and 4/5 if staying till last orders (which has been rare this year - ill wind and all that ;-) - ideally having 2/3 days off or single pint at home.

If you want to go into heart and lung conditioning an exercise bike is the easiest for indoors with the short 20 second burst method or I have seen plenty of friends get strength and suppleness with yoga - which I guess I will attempt at some stage.

Best of health for the new year to you all.

Posted by: DG | Dec 31 2020 2:14 utc | 51

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I just lost 10 kilograms in the last 6 weeks, from BMI 31 to BMI 27,4. It was not difficult at all. Since april I wanted to loose weight (to mitigate Corona-risk), but no result at all. It was too difficult. Since october I started to listen to Youtubes of medics promoting low-carb-high-fat diet. Slowly I stopped using sugar. And I slowly adapted to not eat from 21 hours in the evening till noon the next day (this is called: time restricted eating). My goal was not weight-loss, but getting rid of diabetes 2. But the weight-loss is already here, and I hope to get rid of diabetes in the future.
A typical meal at noon is like this: 80 grams lamb meat in lots of coconutoil. 250 grams vegetables (Wok-veggies, red onion, broccoli) in lots of olive oil, smuthered in a pan for 15 minutes. Put some ketjap manis on it. 150 grams yoghurt with a teaspoon curcuma and lots of olive oil. My second and last mealof the day, at 1800 hours: same vegetables, replace the meat by an egg, or by fatty fish. Add an avocado. Because you eat a lot of fat, you are not hungry. In the morning, after not eating for 10 hours, your body will get into ketosis: it starts to use fat from the fat reserves.

But there is more: the 'intermittend fasting' will cause the body to clean itself up, and repair damage. In mice and rats this leads to up to a 30 % longer life. Some names (doctors, scientists, podcasters): Valter Longo, Jason Fung, Dr Gundry, Mark Hyman, Lewis Howes, Rob Lustig, Dr Berg, Rhonda Patrick, Colin Champ, Stephen Cunane, Dale Beresden, Stephen Finney, Tim Noakes etc etc.
Good luck !

Posted by: Hugo Jansen | Dec 31 2020 2:23 utc | 52

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Smoking is a class issue.
But stop it!
Good on the weight loss.

Posted by: Duncan Idaho | Dec 31 2020 2:28 utc | 53

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Having smoked most of my life, the time arrived when the toll increased, apparent slightly. Finally I began to chew red man tobacco
Full nicotine hit, stopped smoking, then gave up the red man chew.
Best wishes.

Posted by: Robert pyle | Dec 31 2020 3:43 utc | 54

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Congrats b for getting to a comfortable place. Perseverance.

Here in the dark heartland of empire people are admonished by nutritionists to eat smaller portions but looking at americans I don’t think most are following the advice. If they are even following the old dietary recommendations I would be surprised.
People here are huge! on average. I passed a young couple walking down a store aisle recently. They took up the entire aisle. It’s almost as though since everybody here is so huge, its seen as normal.

I adjusted the contents of my diet as I aged, keeping the volume about the same, so i’ve kept a fairly steady BMI of ~20 since teenage years, for nearly 50 years, with minor fluctuations. (I am not normal in the above sense.) I was always very active and am still very active. I still jog, lift weights and do work which requires exertion. (I lift light weights so that exertion is easier.)

The main change I made to my diet as I grew older was drastically **reducing the % of carbohydrates**, replacing starch (bread, pasta, etc.) with more vegetables. As I’ve been a dairy vegetarian since age 16, I eat lots of ‘organic’ eggs, milk and yogurt (plain with honey), and use cheese sparingly. I usually eat a small handful of nuts every day as a snack— almonds, walnuts and pecans. No refined products. Olive oil as cooking oil. No butter except what’s in the whole organic milk. For a treat I cook Tsuru Mai brown rice — a big carb out — and dress it with olive oil, stone ground mustard, herbs and balsamic vinegar. I’ve never liked sweets much except for chocolate which I indulge sparingly.

I eat one main meal daily, toward the end of the day, relying on hot milk/strong coffee mix and sometimes eggs in the A.M, usually before or after a quick jog. Evening meals consist of complex salads (been doing this for over twenty years) which take up an entire dinner plate. Spears of carrot, pickles, cucumber, sweet peppers (whatever is in season from the garden) radiate out around the perimeter of the plate for crisp munchies while the center of the plate is filled with chopped mixed greens (summer) or chopped cabbage (winter), topped with chopped herbs, cooked veggies, a few chopped nuts, sometimes bits of blue cheese, sometimes tangerine slices, sometime a small amount of rice, the kitchen sink, dressed with olive oil and balsamic vinegar. It's filling and satisfying. At first I missed the hearty homemade wheat bread hot out of the oven slathered with butter and jam, but the transition was relatively painless since slow. I never acquired a taste for soda, sugar drinks, or sugar snacks or sugared foods, so it was more starch than sugar I had to replace with other foods as I grew older.

When I was an exchange student in Northern Europe I learned to smoke filterless cigarettes, eventually switching to a long-stemmed pipe. That lasted a few years or more. It was very acceptable and sociable to smoke with others, especially after a big meal. Of course, I smoked all the time after a while, not just after meals. After I quit, I wondered how I had had the time to smoke at all. Also, the tobacco made my fingers smell, my clothes smell, my hair smell. Since smell and taste are not very active senses when a smoker, I didn't mind while I smoked, or at least that was my experience. Since then I much prefer fragrances and tastes to tobacco but then I didn't really have a bad nicotine addiction. My dad said when he quit his mind was never the same. He was a chain smoker for decades. Don't know what he meant. Okay, rattling on here.

Congrats and thanks so much for this blog.

Posted by: suzan | Dec 31 2020 4:54 utc | 55

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Congratulations b delighted to hear your story of resolve. Hope those of us (yep me too) who need/want to lose some weight will be strengthened by your words and those of other commenters who have "mastered" their weight wishes and healthier life styles.
Happy New Year too. Hopefully 2021 will be kinder and happier for us all.

Posted by: Ribcluck | Dec 31 2020 6:03 utc | 56

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suzan @ 55

> My dad said when he quit his mind was never the same. He was a chain smoker for decades. Don't know what he meant.

Nicotine is a mild addiction. It's easy to beat nicotine in a matter of 72 hours, with lots of water, gallons, as you flush the nicotine out. However, what you have left over is much worse than an addiction. You still have your habit to get rid of and as most any nuns would tell you, that's a very hard thing to do! That's the hard part of beating tobacco, not the nicotine. Your dad's habit ran deeper than most, hence the sheer difficulty of trying to stop, when practically anything he did from waking to bedtime was a trigger. Most people only have a few, like after meals, or talking on the phone. The more you have the more difficult the task. I'd say by the time he'd shed all his triggers and still maintained his sanity, that sanity had been so severely strained it was never to be the same?

I tried group hypnosis and the fellow hypnotized the class as a whole, perhaps a dozen people. To prove we were hypnotized he had us smoke a cigarette that seemed like the first one we'd ever smoked. Everyone, including myself coughed and gagged and felt physically ill. He then gave the class a post hypnotic suggestion, which was whenever we had a strong urge for a smoke we just needed to roll our eyes towards our foreheads for a moment, or two and the urge would dissipate and it did countless times. That class was thirty five years ago and i haven't smoked tobacco since. Cannabis, on the other hand is my only med, other than too much sugar. Avoid most all pharmaceuticals, including aspirin, altho occasionally antibiotics when needed.

Try hypnosis, b cause it'll work if you truly want to quit.

Posted by: aye, myself & me | Dec 31 2020 6:27 utc | 57

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Well done!
I'm in similar mode -- started at 120kg about 12 months ago and have managed to drift down to around 110kg +/-. Aiming for around 100kg.

Posted by: imo | Dec 31 2020 7:02 utc | 58

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Piotr Berman @ 25

> If it works for you, it is fine, but starch can be a great part of your food when you diet.

I agree with you but my problem was that I was in an extreme situation. 7 months ago I weighed 180kg (H 192cm) had a blood pressure iof 165/110 blood sugar level of 6.0 and I'm in my mid forties.

So I had three options:
1) Bariatric surgery
2) Start with medication
3) Rapid weight loss through diet and exercise

I chose option 3. People who choose option 1 in my experience don't live long after the surgery. People who chose option 2 in my experience stay on medication for life.

Now I am 127.8kg , my blood pressure is 124/79, my blood sugar level is 4.2. But diets are like Windows updates. They correct one problem but create another at the same time.

While blood pressure and blood sugar decreased as a result of the diet my cholesterol level increased. Too much cheese, cold meats, etc. as they are the perfect snack food. So now I have to adjust my diet to decrease the cholesterol but at the same time not increase the other two.

So now I have cut dairy except for yoghurt, and cold meats (bockwurst/frankfurters/smoked viennas etc.) and replaced it with raw oats, Provitas (whole grain bread). and eventually I'll add pasta but the Italian type made with grano duro.

I just want to get below 120kg and then I'll be happy.

Posted by: Down South | Dec 31 2020 7:07 utc | 59

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If you go whole food plant based, you will feel even better. Happy new year.

Posted by: Alex | Dec 31 2020 7:24 utc | 60

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Look into Dr. John McDougall's plant-starch-staple diet for excellent results: eat to appetite - never feeling hungry - of all the permitted foods, which are plentiful, and highly satisfying. Watch a pound a week of weight fall off - without any effort of self-denial at all, and notice your weight - and your appetite - stabilise at a lean status; all without any great effort. I took off about 30 pounds this way, and have kept it off since. All done very painlessly, and without much in the way of even paying attention to it; just eat - always to satisfaction - of the permitted (delicious and filling) foods: https://www.drmcdougall.com/health/education/free-mcdougall-program/

Posted by: Rhisiart Gwilym | Dec 31 2020 10:27 utc | 61

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Congratulations for understanding that the only medically correct way is to reduce caloric intake.
One bone to pick, though, in:

"One would think that the obvious evidence of preponderance within the U.S. population would be sufficient to meet the "preponderance of the evidence" required by law."

Witty but totally wrong. Also, it seems that the expert panel thought exactly like yo do, arguing the rising prevalence of obesity, diabetes, heart disease etc. when what they should have done was to prove that a reduction from 10% to 6% sugar etc. makes a significant outcome impact. As far as I know there isn't such clear-cut data.

Posted by: Piero Colombo | Dec 31 2020 10:31 utc | 62

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Congratulations, B.! Regarding sports, I'd suggest you try cycling. Not on regular bikes, but on a recumbent bicycle. Why? Because it's a great workout, but painless and actually fun! I never have to force myself to ride my recumbent. On the contrary, not being able to ride (like on a rainy day) is what put me in a bad mood. Living in Germany you have the privilege of having quite a few recumbent manufacturers nearby, like HP Velotechnik, Toxy and Hase. Be sure to check them out. You won't regret it.

Posted by: Mordaz | Dec 31 2020 12:10 utc | 63

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Walking! You can work up to 10,000 steps a day.

Posted by: lizzie dw | Dec 31 2020 12:22 utc | 64

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That's fantastic b. you have such willpower. congratulations. Happy New Year! w/love ~ annie

Posted by: annie | Dec 31 2020 12:33 utc | 65

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How could anyone question a panel of experts sponsored by the government?

Posted by: Liberty Blogger | Dec 31 2020 13:07 utc | 66

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Bernhard, congratulations. Truly the only way to deal with matters. Hint: I love fat cheese, fat generally.

Although, I have to admit having to get a new wardrobe, always was the signal I couldn't understand people would ever ignore... But yes, that's me. To the extent I had to watch it, masochistic may not completely cover it. ...

That said: The very, very best to you in 2021.

Full Discovery: I was interviewed in Cologne a couple of years back by a radio reporter on the street. What would be my new year resolution? My response was: *Why would I want to change something on the first day of a new year, which I didn't feel I should change in the rest of the year?*

But curiously enough, I decided to finally quit smoking. I do have to admit that my body signalled it to me earlier. And yes, I started earlier with one or the other ...?

Posted by: moon | Dec 31 2020 14:12 utc | 67

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Thanks for relating your weight-loss journey, b. As a failed smoking giver-upperer, I've had a lot of experience at giving up smoking.
If you're thinking of embarking on the ex-smoker journey next, keep in mind that you'll almost certainly gain weight - and it can be tempting to resume smoking as a short-term fix for the new weight-gain problem.

There are lots of useful suggestions in this thread but the comment from
*Grieved | Dec 30 2020 20:41 utc | 19*
struck a chord with me.

I agree with Grieved that giving up nicotine is a tough battle and needs to be thoroughly pondered, and planned in advance. Just for starters one could/should make a list of all of ones own pathetic excuses for breaking ones vows.

Ten years ago a female friend bought a few packets of cigarettes and chain-smoked until it made her physically ill (aversion therapy). That cured her of the desire to smoke. Unfortunately, it didn't cure her of the desire to EAT...

Posted by: Hoarsewhisperer | Dec 31 2020 14:19 utc | 68

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Congratulations on your weight loss. Let me add a name for you that you probably never herd before. His name is
Hira Ratan Manek. He set out to tell the world in recent times to begin sun gazing. The rests up to you!

Posted by: warren schaich | Dec 31 2020 14:51 utc | 69

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Only one of my offspring became addicted to smoking. When he decided to give up his (planned, cold-turkey) attempts eventually ended in failure. The approach which ultimately worked for him was to tell EVERYONE he knew that he had given up smoking, it was easy, and he was 100% certain that he would never smoke again.

As one of the umpteen dozen people whom he told of his victory over smoking, I used to regularly ask how it was going. The reply was always "Yep, No problem."
A couple of years into this successful journey, I phoned him to ask if he had any tips for me - given the obvious ease and success of his formula. His reply shocked me.
"No, Dad. That was all bullshit. It was the hardest thing I have ever done. But I figured that shame the only thing that would work for me."

Posted by: Hoarsewhisperer | Dec 31 2020 15:00 utc | 70

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Happy New Year's! And congrats on reaching your goal! Thank you for sharing the encouragement and, as always, your continued wisdom

Posted by: RMY | Dec 31 2020 15:04 utc | 71

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Hello B,

Having read today's post, I thought you might appreciate how I gave up smoking. I had just had my first child and was determined to kick the habit; and not just because his mother said I had too ;-).

My method was simple and straight forward: From day 1 the only rule was that I could not have a cigarette at an earlier time of day than I had smoked my first one of the previous day. eg. Day 1, 1st cigarette 9:00am; Day 2, 1st cigarette any time after 9:00am (in the early days that would be 9:01am). As days and weeks passed my 1st cigarette got to be later and later in the day. Long story short; after a few months my first cigarette was well into the evening, until one day I went to bed without having had a cigarette. At no stage did I ever limit the number of cigarettes I allowed myself to smoke after my 'start-up' time, so I never felt like I was rationing myself which I think was a significant factor.

Anyway good luck with your endeavour.

Posted by: Osaze Ehibor | Dec 31 2020 15:10 utc | 72

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Kudos! I enjoyed reading this. And it's truly motivational. I wish you and every member of this community a happy new year!

Posted by: Steve | Dec 31 2020 15:13 utc | 73

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Good for you and very impressive.
That said, when looking at the BMI, and having been thin during the bulk of my life, including clearly underweight at some point, yet having taken some pounds in the last 15 years, I tend to think the BMI is a bit off for "healthy". While it makes sense to consider anything above 24 as overweight, I would also put anything under 20 as underweight, when it comes to male bodies at least.
Funnily, I also lost some weight this year, contrary to plenty of people including acquaintances who told me "I spent too many hours cooking for myself and gained X pounds". Over these last 15-20 years, I gained a bit, say a pound a year on average, yet at times a full kg. No massive gain that would be worrying, but it added up - even though I still was in the "healthy" range of BMI, going from 62 to 74 kg, a couple of times a year you can't help but extrapolate where you'll be 20 years from now.
Then came the spring lockdown, and I lost 3 kg and my usually way too high cholesterol level dropped - I don't expect it to ever hit "normal" levels, but I hadn't been at this level for the last 10 years. It's just that I hadn't to walk to the office, walk in the office, and unlike my usual habits, I never felt hungry before meals and never felt the urge to snack a bit late in the evening. Cutting down by 1/3 my soda intake (replaced with water) and stopping eating crackers, popcorn and whatever else on the evening did it. No obvious loss during the late 2020 lockdown, but same weight as back in May-June.
On the other hand, way too few exercising during spring, except some walking, which hurt a bit, so I had to correct that a bit. Hopefully, when the current mess is over, I'll be able to hit the swimming pool once again - walking has never been an issue, that part is fully covered, it's other body parts that suffer.

Posted by: Clueless Joe | Dec 31 2020 15:24 utc | 74

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I've been dieting since I was 10 years old, always fat, was relatively normal weight in college, did a fair bit of exercise but my knees went bad and then my weight ballooned. I had tried every single diet you can imagine from simple calorie counting to the cabbage soup diet, to low-fat. Had tried Atkins with great results fifteen years ago but was seduced by a bag of chocolate chip cookies and ballooned again. Two years ago I was morbidly obese and could hardly get out of my chair. My son saved me by getting onto the KETO diet, combined with intermediate fasting, e.g. a window from 6pm to 9pm I can eat. I've lost 35 kilos in two years and have the following observations:

1) the popular narrative on food in general is aimed at helping out the food corporations, not improve peoples health. Note that US obesity took off roughly when the FDA food pyramid came out, thanks in part to George McGoverns efforts to make it law as a payback to Archer Daniels Midlands.

2) obesity in the US *really* went vertical about the time that "low-fat" meme. Really great replacing fat with more carbs in most of these foods...

3) going to KETO + intermediate fasting for me is really a life style change. Food containing carbs I no longer consider to be food. I eat better now than ever before, lots of cheese & cream, bacon, butter, but the key to making it work is a bread substitute. I bake my own, with almond flour, linseed, coconut flour, lots of eggs, and the results are quite reasonable and I no longer have uncontrollable urges to eat fresh baked french bread.

4) There are substitutes for everything in KETO. Cauliflower makes great paella for example, as well as potato salad or mash. Alulosa/Tagatosa allow for occasional desserts, although
I keeps these at a minimum. My daughter makes fantastic KETO chocolates, fake Reeses cups, cookies, etc. Can make many great desserts with blueberries, raspberries which counteract the carbs they have with high fiber. All KETO.

5) The key is that you have to invest time, and more money, in eating. This is what the french used to do, everything fresh purchased the same day, and they were not obese (they are now, thanks to the poisonous influence of the US food industry). The french typically would spend up to a quarter of their income on food, and the lesson is that to be healthy, one need to adopt that filosophy.

6) I gave up liquor, but I still smoke (only cigars now). I have no doubt two packs a day of cigarettes are terrible for health, and those two packs of cigarettes probably not enjoyed very much as someone typically is "doing something else" while smoking them. With my cigars, I am sitting outside relaxing with some good coffee and friends. As for the medical narrative so much against smoking, these are the same clowns that claimed for so many years cholesterol levels cause heart disease so their claims on nicotine are somewhat tainted, particular since some studies seem to support some nicotine helping against Alzheimers for example, and perhaps even COVID..

Posted by: Simplicius | Dec 31 2020 16:03 utc | 75

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OK maybe I'm not a doctor. But who cares, since they really know very little anyway. Well they study to the point of self-torture in school (and half of that 'study' is just of ephemeral dogma that will be completely refuted in a hundred years). So whatever you do, don't listen to me. I try to keep things simple (as if I had any choice). Congratulations on losing the fat, b! Body fat is bad.

I have been fighting my own battle with the fat, but am unsure of how well I am doing. I am learning a few things. I try to keep as close to a ketogenic diet as is bearable. Want to get as much of my food energy as possible from 'good' oils -- which are mostly olive oil (the real thing, most olive oil is labeled fraudulently), and coconut oil. You can fry stuff with the coconut oil, but never with olive oil (which turns very toxic when heated too much). But I never fry anything, but cook or steam most everything with a 'Magic Pot' type pressure cooker. I think a small amount of starch (preferably a small potato -- rice has high arsenic levels) is necessary. Some protein (very well balanced with all 20 amino acids) is needed, but any protein the body re-assemble use to build its own proteins will be converted (in a less than ideal way) to glucose (which is almost the same as starch). Lots of broccoli, fresh tomatoes etc. too. Very little red meat; there seems to be something very bad about red meat. No more fish for me, since they are always hopelessly polluted. Spice milled chia seeds a great! You will die a very healthy death due to depression with my diet.

Smoking -- that the super-fast lane to death. It does far more harm than just cause the big C. I stopped by using Chantix. But I didn't go for the months-long 12 step nonsense. I just stopped smoking after two days on it, and then quit the drug on about the tenth day. At that point I had completely 'detoxed', but the lower level craving went on for about six months. It was really not that hard. But I did gain weight like a human water balloon. It's a tough road.

Alcohol is another poison that radically takes away from life, and can even cause cancer. Most people have no idea what insane things these toxic addictions do to the metabolism! They make you get old real fast!

I think 'exercise' burns virtually zero fat directly, but it quietly causes you to breath harder, and I think that about 95% of a persons carbon (fat) load is shed by breathing out CO2.

Live long and prosper, and most important: Keep on blogging!

Posted by: blues | Dec 31 2020 16:26 utc | 76

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Hmm, I propose that anyone weighing more than 120 kg be put in "camps" because they are fatsoes. Now how is that going to work out? Put a barbed wire around the US, this done, problem solved.
You hardly ever see an American on TV or where ever that is not overweight or obese, why is that so? Take a trip around Europe or even Russia and you see plenty of people in their 50-60-70 ties being trim and fit... Maybe we still eat more healthily than our American "partners" I certainly dont know, but I can guess..
A happy new Year to all barflies.

Posted by: Den lille abe | Dec 31 2020 16:45 utc | 77

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Re: Suggestions by farm ecologist | Dec 30 2020 20:16 utc | 12

I would second them.

Posted by: gm | Dec 31 2020 16:48 utc | 78

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And before anyone get in high gear: I am 63 years old, 186 cm tall or low and weigh in at an impressing 78 kilogrammes (naked) no photoes are available ;)
I have no car, but own 3 bicycles, one electric with cargo space, another a semi pro race bike a Battaglin also Campagnolo stuff, and a full blown race bike a Vitus 979 with Campagnolo stuff on it. The last I have had for it 35 years. :) Total weight = 6,670 kg. I would to afford better rims on it, but.....Carbonfibre, well If I win in Lotto.
Shopping = cargo bike, which is a treat, carries 100 kg cargo for 30 km, with you virtually doing next to nothing.
Getting fresh air or joyride = any of the other two
And when my daughters visit me: a lot of adjusting and srewing up or down, and I end up on the cargobike :(
They have bikes at home, they do not use them much, but of course they are not like the ones they have here.
I fell a tear when I sold my Mercedes Benz 280 CDI, but I did not have a use for it anymore, but bloody hell, what a lovely car!
Happy New year everyone!

Posted by: Den lille abe | Dec 31 2020 17:14 utc | 79

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@ Posted by: aye, myself & me | Dec 31 2020 6:27 utc | 57

That’s possible. I assumed it had more to do with being able to relax. He was a passionate driven man and imo the cigarettes allowed him to relax.

The tetraethyl lead corporation and their well-paid sycophants labeled him a “zealot” when he pushed back against their crimes against society, imo a compliment. In the end, he (and others, as he’d always emphasize that science is a collective project) won the battle for everyday people against monied-interests’ killing ways. Of course it was not enough, only an example of problems we face, now so widespread.

A friend recently sent me an article about him which I’d never seen before. It captures his lack of so-called sanity, which more of us could well do without imho. He rarely relaxed after he quit smoking and never compromised on his scientific work.

bird shit artistry makes a statement

Posted by: suzan | Dec 31 2020 17:22 utc | 80

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Congratulations, B.

More tips:
1. Walk at least a half hour every day. Not only burns a few calories but speeds up metabolism and you also feel better, joints work better, etc. Walking is also great time for thinking.

2. Eat main meal in middle of day. Don't eat anything after 3 p.m. except maybe an apple, small yogurt, etc.

3. Eat lots of soup, made with good-quality broth.

4. If the scales refuse to budge, just drink water or some good quality broth for a day or two---you will suddenly be down a kilo.

5. Don't skimp on animal fats. They make things taste good and make you feel full, so less desire to snack.

Posted by: Jane | Dec 31 2020 17:49 utc | 81

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Not much to add to the above great comments. but ...

I used to be a compulsive smoker (light the next off the old butt) and tried to quit a thousand times. When I finally did, I went cold turkey. Stopped buying, then stopped bumming, then stopped lighting one for a friend. After three months, I would dream about smoking, and would awake revulsed, but with a subliminal desire to smoke. Because this addition/habituation is so deep, this urge didn't go away for around three years. Finally, as my taste buds and olfactory sense got better, I became sickened by the smell of the things.
As for diet, I dropped about 50 lbs when I retired and have kept them off. Could stand to lose about 15 more, but am not obsessed about it. Adopted a low carb diet, shied away from fast foods (I am a good cook), and, quite frankly, used the maxim to "not eat anything white" (refined flour, sugar, pasta, potatoes, etc.) as most comfort/fast foods are loaded with sugar and starches. Also do not drink carbonated, sweet drinks, being happy with water. It is easier to keep the calories out of your mouth than to take them off your stomach/hips.
Exercise is vital. I work on the basis of walking 2-3 miles/day, and use calisthenics to work on the upper body strength. Just 5 push-ups a day (and slowly expanding that as your capabilities mature).

Good luck with your endeavors, and thank you for your blog!

Posted by: naiverealist | Dec 31 2020 17:55 utc | 82

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Congratulations, Bernhard! You did much right, that is going slowly rather than resorting to a faddish extreme diet.

About that smoking... You might consider making a point to get exercise you enjoy in the fresh air, if you can find the latter near where you live. Move (walk, bicycle, or whatever) at a pace that's comfortable that also has you taking deep breaths. Find something you enjoy doing in a pleasing location. You may find that fresh air smells much better than the taste of tobacco that rises from your lungs and throat. Add that to the advice by other commenters about kicking the nicotine addiction.

Good luck and a thousand thanks for this blog.

Posted by: Tiger Lily | Dec 31 2020 18:28 utc | 83

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This is the real reason the scientific advisory committee wants to review the American dietary guidelines:

Yes, Americans are Fat. The US Military is Fatter.

> “Military leaders are worried about the shrinking pool of young people who qualify for military service,” Gina Harkins reports at Military.com. “More than 70% of young Americans remain unable to join the military due to obesity, education problems, or crime and drug records.”
>
> Mission: Readiness, a group of retired military officers, wants the US Department of Defense to create an “advisory committee on military recruitment,” with a view toward getting the next generation in shape so that they’re qualified, as the old saying goes, to “travel to exotic, distant lands; meet exciting, unusual people; and kill them.”

Here's the link to Gina Harkins' quoted article (the link in Knapp's article is the wrong one): Obesity and Other Problems Barring Teens from Military Service Need National Attention, Leaders Say

In Harkins' article, there's one more important information Knapp left out of his rant piece:

> The leaders are calling on the Defense Department to work with the departments of Agriculture, Education, Health and Human Services and Justice to help address the issues. It matches a recommendation in the 2021 defense policy bill in which lawmakers called for the defense secretary to work with other federal departments to address problems affecting the military's ability to recruit new service members.

The goal, then, is for Americans to get healthier so they can serve as cannon fodder in the next World War, which will be fought on a global scale in China, Russia, Venezuela and Iran.

Health is a 20th Century invention. Before the end of the 19th Century, nobody cared about the health of anybody (even the rich). It was just common sense that, the fatter the person, the healthier he/she was (and richer, hence the "moneybags" stereotype). It was only with the rise of industrial warfare, in the decade that preceded WWI, that the concept of health in the sense of physical aptitude and readiness arose. Not by coincidence, it was also in this period that the rise of sports (the Olympic Games are from the end of the 19th Century) and Eugenics (founded by Darwin's cousin more or less at the same epoch). The IQ test is also from the same era (first decade of the 20th Century, by an American military officer to test his recruits).

It is ironic that Nietzsche's "Übermensch" dream was only made possible with the development of the productive forces (industrialization) that he abhorred. Can't blame him, as he didn't think dialectically and, by his time (1844-1900), already was a living fossil, a complete outlier in the German philosophical tradition, a madman who claimed to be Schopenhauer's lost disciple.

Posted by: vk | Dec 31 2020 18:32 utc | 84

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b also don't forget / overlook your reward !
Very very important, it shouldn't all just be about a punishing regime and negatives.
You'v done well loosing weight.
The money you have saved means you can spend on some real luxury items of clothing. Taylor made jackets shirts, maybe a flamboyant red cravat or silk scarf, maybe gold ring or cuff-links. That's the carrot at the end of the stick.
Granted we're locked down, but none the less with your new slim line physic and style, you'l look good and feel good.
Endorphins, one of my favourite drugs.
Triple bonus.
The girls know this.

Posted by: Mark2 | Dec 31 2020 20:33 utc | 85

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Hoarsewhisperer's comment @ 68 calls attention to the complicated relationship between smoking and eating. Many people esp women take up smoking at a young age, later becoming addicted, to control their eating and/or as a way of staying slim.

Perhaps one way of tackling a smoking addiction is to try to understand and acknowledge the reasons a person took up smoking originally. If the reason was to deal with an eating issue, then that issue might need dealing with as well, so that giving up smoking does not lead to over-eating. Having something in your hands or in your mouth to stave off boredom and discomfort becomes the issue. Perhaps chewing on carrot or celery sticks, or the occasional stick of dark chocolate, might be what's needed for some people.

Posted by: Jen | Dec 31 2020 20:33 utc | 86

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more americans eat themselves to death than people who starve to death in Africa. Factaroony.

Posted by: Sid | Dec 31 2020 21:02 utc | 87

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